

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for managing software assets using a web-based system including a server system coupled to a centralized database and at least one client system, said method comprising:

identifying solution alternatives;

initiating and completing acquisition process;

deploying software;

maintaining and reviewing software contracts;

retiring software; and

providing auditing capabilities to a user for tracking software assets owned and licensed by a business entity.

2. A method according to Claim 1 wherein said step of identifying solution alternatives further comprises the steps of storing and updating information into the database.

3. A method according to Claim 2 wherein said steps of storing and updating information into the database further comprises the step of storing and updating at least as one of a last name of an employee, a first name of the employee, a middle initial of the employee, a status of the employee, a building and room code where the employee is located, a work phone number, a user identification, an e-mail address, a facsimile number, a manager's name who has direct supervisory authority over the employee, a department name and code of the department, a payroll number, a social security number, and a pay cycle category such as weekly, biweekly and monthly.

4. A method according to Claim 3 wherein said steps of storing and updating information into the database further comprises the step of storing and updating at least one of a software title, a software serial number, a software manufacturer, a brief description of the software, a date on which software was acquired, restrictions or limitations on software use, employees on whose desktop the software was installed, purchase order details relating to the software verifying the

proof of purchase, any comments on software functionality, and other pertinent details useful to prove legal ownership and use of the software.

5. A method according to Claim 3 wherein said steps of storing and updating information into the database further comprises the step of storing and updating at least one of a serial number for hardware, a name of an employee whom the specific hardware has been assigned to and the date on which assigned, details on the hardware such as a manufacturer's name, an address, warranty information, hardware capabilities including specifications, month and a year of acquisition, hardware classification such as a desktop unit or a laptop unit, any lease related information, if applicable, and other pertinent details useful to prove legal ownership and use of the hardware.

6. A method according to Claim 3 wherein said steps of storing and updating information into the database further comprises the step of storing and updating at least one of a software title, a software serial number, a software manufacturer, a brief description of the software, a date on which software was licensed, restrictions or limitations on software use, employees on whose desktop the software was installed, contract details relating to the software licensing verifying the license, any comments on software functionality, and other pertinent details useful to prove valid licensing and use of the software.

7. A method according to Claim 3 wherein said steps of storing and updating information into the database further comprises the step of storing and updating at least one of a department title, a manager's name, a manager's social security number, a manager's mail stop code, a telephone number and an extension, a business unit contact person's name, a telephone number, mail code, address, facsimile number and other relevant information of the contact person.

8. A method according to Claim 3 wherein said steps of storing and updating information into the database further comprises the step of storing and updating at least one of a vendor name, a vendor's business address including a city, state and zip code, vendor status such as preferred or non preferred, quality rating of the vendor, customer service rating of the vendor, contact person's name for the vendor, terms on which the vendor expects to get paid, and any other vendor relationship details regarding the vendor.

9. A method according to Claim 3 wherein said steps of storing and updating information into the database further comprises the step of storing and updating at least one of general training materials available for each of the software purchased and licensed and instructions on how to obtain such training materials.

5 10. A method according to Claim 3 wherein said steps of storing and updating information into the database further comprises the step of storing and updating at least one of self assessment responses against a set of specific questions, responses of independent audit against a set of specific questions, any self assessment comments, comments by an audit committee, Business unit's name, location, and a
10 person completing self assessment, and compliance information to the overall software management process based on the response of the self assessment in terms of Software Management Sigma Value.

11. A method according to Claim 1 wherein said step of identifying solution alternatives further comprises the step of defining business requirements.

15 12. A method according to Claim 1 wherein said step of identifying solution alternatives further comprises the step of analyzing information technology requirements.

13. A method according to Claim 1 wherein said step of identifying solution alternatives further comprises the step of analyzing environmental standards.

20 14. A method according to Claim 1 wherein said step of identifying solution alternatives further comprises the step of reviewing and finalizing business solution requirements.

25 15. A method according to Claim 1 wherein said step of identifying solution alternatives further comprises the step of identifying software alternatives that meet business requirements.

16. A method according to Claim 1 wherein said step of initiating and completing acquisition process further comprises the steps of evaluating and checking for existing software contracts.

30 17. A method according to Claim 1 wherein said step of initiating and completing acquisition process further comprises the steps of:

making a decision to at least one of using an existing software, buying a new software, and building a new software;

implementing the decision to at least one of using an existing software, buying a new software, and building a new software.

5 18. A method according to Claim 17 wherein said step of implementing the decision further comprises the steps of:

reviewing results of the decision;

preparing and submitting at least one of a Request for Proposal and a Request for Information to prospective vendors and reviewing results; and

10 negotiating and selecting a vendor to acquire the software.

19. A method according to Claim 17 wherein said step of implementing the decision further comprises the step of deciding at least one of copying an existing software and purchasing additional licenses for the existing software.

15 20. A method according to Claim 18 wherein said step of reviewing results of the decision further comprises the step of at least one of approving the decision and rejecting the decision based on subjective and objective criteria.

20 21. A method according to Claim 18 wherein said step of reviewing results of the decision further comprises the step of entering the decision into the database.

25 22. A method according to Claim 18 wherein said step of reviewing results of the decision further comprises the step of ensuring compliance with equity investments guidelines, contract terms and conditions and other legal and financial requirements prior to acquisition of the software.

23. A method according to Claim 18 wherein said step of negotiating and selecting a vendor to acquire the software further comprises the step of executing at least one of a purchase order and a contract to acquire the software.

24. A method according to Claim 1 wherein said step of deploying software further comprises the step of installing software.

25. A method according to Claim 1 wherein said step of deploying software further comprises the steps of:

5 tracking licenses; and

updating the database with the current information relating to licenses.

26. A method according to Claim 1 wherein said step of maintaining and reviewing software contracts further comprises the steps of:

reviewing maintenance terms of a software contract; and

10 purchasing upgrades for the software contract.

27. A method according to Claim 1 wherein said step of maintaining and reviewing software contracts further comprises the step of maintaining software.

28. A method according to Claim 1 wherein said step of maintaining and reviewing software contracts further comprises the step of further
15 deploying an upgraded version of the software.

29. A method according to Claim 1 wherein said step of maintaining and reviewing software contracts further comprises the step of updating software purchase related information into the database.

20 30. A method according to Claim 1 wherein said step of maintaining and reviewing software contracts further comprises the step of updating software license related information into the database.

31. A method according to Claim 1 wherein said step of maintaining and reviewing software contracts further comprises the step of renewing
25 maintenance contract.

32. A method according to Claim 1 wherein said step of retiring software which includes de-installing and destroying software to meet the legal

restrictions on the use of the software further comprises the step of updating the software license management system database with revised licensing information.

33. A method according to Claim 1 wherein said step of retiring software which includes de-installing and destroying software to meet the legal restrictions on the use of the software further comprises the step of updating the software management system with the purchasing information.

34. A method according to Claim 1 wherein said step of providing auditing capabilities further comprises the steps of evaluating and assessing exposure of a department within the business entity.

35. A method according to Claim 34 wherein said steps of evaluating and assessing exposure of a department within the business entity further comprises the step of computing sigma value.

36. A method according to Claim 35 wherein said steps of computing sigma value further comprises the steps of comparing sigma value against other departments within the business entity.

37. A method according to Claim 34 wherein said step of providing auditing capabilities further comprises the steps of developing and implementing corrective actions to improve the performance of the business entity.

38. A method according to Claim 1 wherein said method further comprising the step of entering information at least through one of a device connected to the client system.

39. A method according to Claim 1 wherein said method further comprising the step of providing information in response to an inquiry.

40. A method according to Claim 39 wherein said step of providing information in response to an inquiry further comprises the steps of:

downloading requested information from a server system; and

displaying requested information on a client system in response to the inquiry.

41. A method according to Claim 39 wherein said step of providing information further comprises the step of printing requested information in a pre-determined format.

5 42. A method according to Claim 39 wherein said step of providing information further comprises the step of accepting an inquiry from a user.

43. A method according to Claim 42 wherein said step of accepting an inquiry further comprises the steps of:

displaying information on the client system; and

receiving an inquiry from the client system.

10 44. A method according to Claim 43 wherein said step of receiving an inquiry from the client system further includes the steps of submitting a request through pull down menus.

15 45. The method according to Claim 43 wherein said step of displaying information further includes displaying an HTML document downloaded by the server system.

46. The method according to Claim 1 wherein the client system and the server system are connected via a network and wherein the network is one of a wide area network, a local area network, an intranet and the Internet.

20 47. A method for tracking software assets owned and licensed by a business entity, said method comprising:

accessing a centralized database containing software assets information;

searching the database regarding a specific inquiry received from a user;

25 retrieving information from the database; and

causing the retrieved information to be displayed for tracking, monitoring and auditing purposes to the user .

48. A method in a web-based system for tracking software assets owned and licensed by a business entity, said method comprising:

displaying a software management assessment check list to a user;

accepting the user responses against the software management assessment check list; and

computing a software management sigma value based on a pre-stored guidelines to the user.

49. A method in a web-based system for tracking software assets owned and licensed by a business entity and providing a software management sigma value based on a pre-stored information, said method comprising:

receiving user input in response to specific questions;

analyzing user input against a pre-determined criteria; and

outputting a software management sigma value.

50. A web-based system for managing software assets, said system comprising a client system, a centralized database for storing information, a server system configured to be coupled to said client system and said centralized database, said server system further configured to:

identify solution alternatives;

initiate and complete acquisition process;

deploy software;

maintain and review software contracts;

retire software; and

provide auditing capabilities to a user to track software assets owned and licensed by a business entity.

51. A system according to Claim 50 wherein said client system further configured with:

a displaying component; and

a sending component to send an inquiry to the server system so that the server system can process and download the requested information to the client system.

5 52. A system according to Claim 51 wherein the sending component functions in response to a click of a mouse button.

53. A system according to Claim 51 wherein the sending component functions in response to a voice command.

10 54. The client system of Claim 51 wherein said server system is protected from access by unauthorized individuals.

55. A system according to Claim 50 wherein said server system is further configured with:

a collection component for collecting information from users into the centralized database;

15 a tracking component for tracking information on an on-going basis;

a displaying component for displaying information;

a receiving component for receiving an inquiry from the client system;

and

20 an accessing component to access the centralized database and causing the retrieved information to be displayed on the client system.

56. A system according to Claim 55 wherein said server system is further configured with a receiving component for receiving an inquiry to provide information from one of a plurality of users.

25 57. A system according to Claim 55 wherein said server system is further configured with a processing component for searching and processing received inquiries against the data storage device containing variety of information collected by the collection component.

58. A system according to Claim 55 wherein said server system is further configured with a retrieving component to retrieve information from the data storage device.

59. A system according to Claim 55 wherein said server system is further configured with an information fulfillment component that downloads the requested information after retrieving from the data storage device to the plurality of users in the order in which the requests were received by the receiving component.

60. A system according to Claim 50 wherein said server system is further configured to provide access only to authorized individuals.

61. A system according to Claim 50 wherein said server system configured to identify solution alternatives is further configured to store and update information into the database.

62. A system according to Claim 61 wherein said server system is further configured to store and update at least as one of a last name of an employee, a first name of the employee, a middle initial of the employee, a status of the employee, a building and room code where the employee is located, a work phone number, a user identification, an e-mail address, a facsimile number, a manager's name who has direct supervisory authority over the employee, a department name and code of the department, a payroll number, a social security number, and a pay cycle category such as weekly, biweekly and monthly.

63. A system according to Claim 61 wherein said server system is further configured to store and update at least one of a software title, a software serial number, a software manufacturer, a brief description of the software, a date on which software was acquired, restrictions or limitations on software use, employees on whose desktop the software was installed, purchase order details relating to the software verifying the proof of purchase, any comments on software functionality, and other pertinent details useful to prove legal ownership and use of the software.

64. A system according to Claim 61 wherein said server system is further configured to store and update at least one of a serial number for hardware, a name of an employee whom the specific hardware has been assigned to and the date on which assigned, details on the hardware such as a manufacturer's name, an address, warranty information, hardware capabilities including specifications, month

and a year of acquisition, hardware classification such as a desktop unit or a laptop unit, any lease related information, if applicable, and other pertinent details useful to prove legal ownership and use of the hardware.

5 65. A system according to Claim 61 wherein said server system is further configured to store and update at least one of a software title, a software serial number, a software manufacturer, a brief description of the software, a date on which software was licensed, restrictions or limitations on software use, employees on whose desktop the software was installed, contract details relating to the software licensing verifying the license, any comments on software functionality, and other
10 pertinent details useful to prove valid licensing and use of the software.

15 66. A system according to Claim 61 wherein said server system is further configured to store and update at least one of a department title, a manager's name, a manager's social security number, a manager's mail stop code, a telephone number and an extension, a business unit contact person's name, a telephone number, mail code, address, facsimile number and other relevant information of the contact
20 person.

25 67. A system according to Claim 61 wherein said server system is further configured to store and update at least one of a vendor name, a vendor's business address including a city, state and zip code, vendor status such as preferred or non preferred, quality rating of the vendor, customer service rating of the vendor, contact person's name for the vendor, terms on which the vendor expects to get paid, and any other vendor relationship details regarding the vendor.

30 68. A system according to Claim 61 wherein said server system is further configured to store and update at least one of general training materials available for each of the software purchased and licensed and instructions on how to obtain such training materials.

 69. A system according to Claim 61 wherein said server system is further configured to store and update at least one of self assessment responses against a set of specific questions, responses of independent audit against a set of specific questions, any self assessment comments, comments by an audit committee, Business unit's name, location, and a person completing self assessment, and compliance

information to the overall software management process based on the response of the self-assessment in terms of Software Management Sigma Value.

70. A system according to Claim 61 wherein said server system is further configured to define business requirements.

5 71. A system according to Claim 61 wherein said server system is further configured to analyze information technology requirements.

72. A system according to Claim 61 wherein said server system is further configured to analyze environmental standards.

10 73. A system according to Claim 61 wherein said server system is further configured to review and finalize business solution requirements.

74. A system according to Claim 61 wherein said server system is further configured to identify software alternatives that meet business requirements.

75. A system according to Claim 50 wherein said server system is further configured to initiate and complete acquisition process.

15 76. A system according to Claim 75 wherein said server system is further configured to evaluate and check for existing software contracts.

77. A system according to Claim 75 wherein said server system is further configured to:

20 make a decision to at least one of using an existing software, buying a new software, and building a new software; and

implement the decision to at least one of using an existing software, buying a new software, and building a new software.

78. A system according to Claim 75 wherein said server system is further configured to:

25 review results of the decision;

prepare and submit at least one of a Request for Proposal and a Request for Information to prospective vendors; and

negotiate and select a vendor to acquire the software.

79. A system according to Claim 78 wherein said server system is further configured to decide at least one of copying an existing software and purchasing additional licenses for the existing software. .

5 80. A system according to Claim 78 wherein said server system is further configured to approve the decision based on subjective and objective criteria.

81. A system according to Claim 78 wherein said server system is further configured to reject the decision based on subjective and objective criteria.

10 82. A system according to Claim 78 wherein said server system is further configured to enter the decision into the database.

83. A system according to Claim 78 wherein said server system is further configured to ensure a compliance with equity investments guidelines, contract terms and conditions and other legal and financial requirements prior to the acquisition of the software.

15 84. A system according to Claim 78 wherein said server system is further configured to execute at least one of a purchase order and a contract to acquire the software.

85. A system according to Claim 84 wherein said server system further configured to deploy software is further configured to install the software.

20 86. A system according to Claim 84 wherein said server system is further configured to track licenses.

87. A system according to Claim 84 wherein said server system is further configured to update the database.

25 88. A system according to Claim 50 wherein said server system configured to maintain and review software contracts is further configured to review maintenance terms of a software contract.

89. A system according to Claim 88 wherein said server system is further configured to purchase upgrades for the software contract.

90. A system according to Claim 88 wherein said server system is further configured to maintain software.

91. A system according to Claim 88 wherein said server system is further configured to deploy an upgraded version of the software.

5 92. A system according to Claim 88 wherein said server system is further configured to update software purchase related information into the database.

93. A system according to Claim 88 wherein said server system is further configured to update software license related information into the database.

10 94. A system according to Claim 88 wherein said server system is further configured to renew maintenance contract.

95. A system according to Claim 50 wherein said server system configured to retire software which includes de-installing and destroying software to meet the legal restrictions on the use of the software is further configured to update the software management system with revised licensing information.

15 96. A system according to Claim 95 wherein said server system is further configured to update the software license management system with the purchasing information.

20 97. A system according to Claim 50 wherein said server system is further configured to evaluate and assess exposure of a department within the business entity.

98. A system according to Claim 97 wherein said server system is further configured to compute sigma value.

25 99. A system according to Claim 97 wherein said server system is further configured to compare sigma value against other departments within the business entity.

100. A system according to Claim 50 wherein said server system is further configured to provide auditing capabilities.

101. A system according to Claim 100 wherein said server system is further configured to develop and implement corrective actions to improve the performance of the department.

5 102. A system according to Claim 100 wherein said server system is further configured to enter information at least through one of a device connected to the client system.

103. A system according to Claim 50 wherein said server system is further configured to provide information in response to an inquiry.

10 104. A system according to Claim 103 wherein said server system is further configured to:

download requested information from a server system; and

display requested information on a client system in response to the inquiry.

15 105. A system according to Claim 104 wherein said server system is further configured to display an HTML document downloaded by the server system.

106. A system according to Claim 103 wherein said server system is further configured to print requested information in a pre-determined format.

107. A system according to Claim 103 wherein said server system is further configured to accept an inquiry from a user.

20 108. A system according to Claim 107 wherein said server system is further configured to:

display information on to the client system; and

receive an inquiry from the client system.

25 109. A system according to Claim 108 wherein said server system is further configured to submit a request through pull down menus.

110. A system according to Claim 108 wherein said server system is further configured to display an HTML document downloaded by the server system.

111. A system according to Claim 108 wherein said server system is further configured to display at least one alternative out of various alternatives available to the user.

5 112. A system according to Claim 108 wherein said server system is further configured to:

access the centralized database;

search the database regarding the specific inquiry;

retrieve information from the database; and

causing the retrieved information to be displayed on the client system.

10 113. A system according to Claim 108 wherein said server system is further configured to submit a request through pull down menus.

114. A software license management system to automate a software management process for managing software assets, measuring compliance requirements, and tracking/reporting status as necessary to assure proficiency and adherence to implementation requirements of the software management process, said system comprising a client system, a centralized database for storing information, a server system configured to be coupled to said client system and said centralized database, said server system further configured to:

20 organize and process information through at least one of an identification of various solution alternatives module, an acquisition module, a deployment module, a maintenance module and a software retirement module;

compute a software management sigma value to measure the effectiveness of the current process; and

25 provide feedback and suggestions based on the software management sigma value to help reduce the exposure to litigation and penalties, maximize software asset utilization through tighter inventory control, and capitalize on the software procurement process.

115. A system for tracking software assets owned and licensed by a business entity, said system comprising a client system, a centralized database for storing information, a server system configured to be coupled to said client system and said centralized database, said server system further configured to:

5 access the centralized database containing software assets information;

search the database regarding a specific inquiry received from a user;

retrieve information from the database; and

cause the retrieved information to be displayed for tracking, monitoring and auditing purposes to the user.

10 116. A system for tracking software assets owned and licensed by a business entity, said system comprising a client system, a centralized database for storing information, a server system configured to be coupled to said client system and said centralized database, said server system further configured to:

display a software management assessment checklist to a user;

15 accept the user responses against the software management assessment check list; and

compute a software management sigma value based on a pre-stored guidelines to the user.

20 117. A system for tracking software assets owned and licensed by a business entity, said system comprising a client system, a centralized database for storing information, a server system configured to be coupled to said client system and said centralized database, said server system further configured to:

receive user input in response to specific questions;

analyze user input against a pre-determined criteria; and

25 output a software management sigma value.

118. A computer system for tracking software assets owned and licensed by a business entity, said computer system comprising a client system, a

centralized database for storing information, a server system configured to be coupled to said client system and said centralized database, said computer system, comprising:

a receiving component that receives and stores information from a user as well as receives a request for specific information from the user;

5 a processing component that processes the received information and analyzes the received information against a pre-determined range of management criteria to satisfy the user request; and

an information fulfillment component that downloads the requested information to the user including a software management sigma value identifying the effectiveness of the current process.

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